



Families Outside  
Support & Information Helpline

April 2014 – March 2015

Reflections On

Our Year



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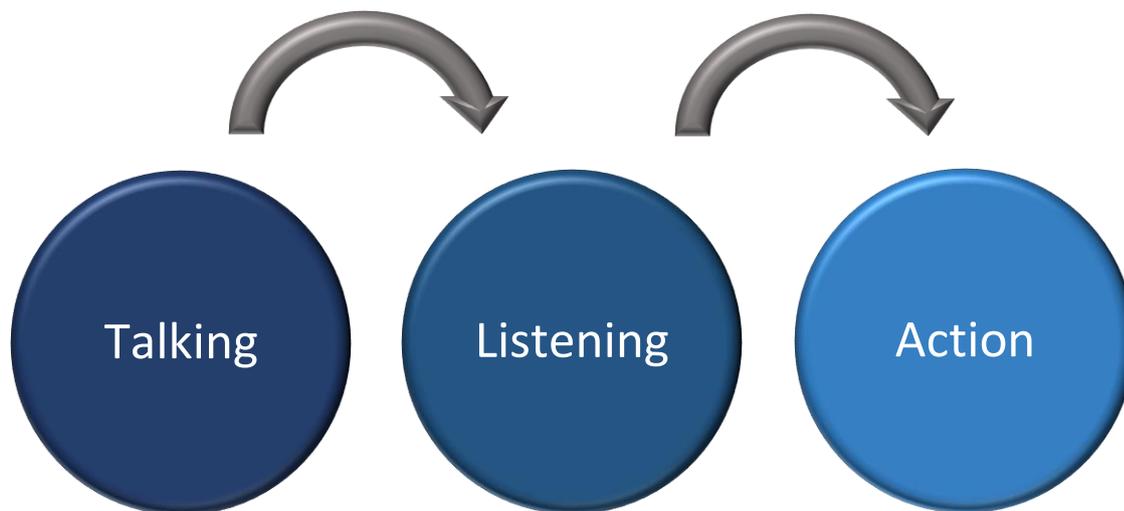
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“I’m so glad that there are people like you here to help us with our questions. Thank you for all the time you’ve spent on this. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart, I do so appreciate it.”

## Support & Information Helpline – who we are

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Families Outside is the only national organisation that works exclusively on behalf of families affected by imprisonment in Scotland. The Support & Information Helpline is our longest running service, in operation for over 20 years to support people affected at each stage of the criminal justice system and beyond. It is a key contributor to two of the three targets in our Strategic Aims, bringing about a wide range of outcomes for families: to provide and increase direct support and information to families, and to raise awareness and influence policy and practice regarding families affected by imprisonment.

Families affected by imprisonment face a range of challenges. The impact of parental imprisonment on children and young people, for example, is often significant and enduring. Families Outside works to mitigate the effects of imprisonment on children and families - and consequently to reduce the likelihood of reoffending - through support and information for families and for the people who work with them.

Families Outside offers a suite of support options, one of which is our Support & Information Helpline. The helpline is often the ‘first port of call’ both for families and for professionals seeking information, support, and guidance. The helpline allows callers the opportunity to discuss their concerns and explore the various options open to them in a supportive, confidential setting.

Talking to assess need, listening carefully and actively, and taking the appropriate action are the cornerstones of our helpline service. As we can see from the testimony below, one call to our helpline service can have a huge impact on the way a family copes in the face of adversity:

*“My family have been torn apart by these offences. I have been dealing with these issues on my own for three years. In one phone call to Families Outside, I have been given hope that relationships in the family can be healed and that we have a future. Thank you.”*

*“Thank you. Speaking to you gave me the opportunity to unload things that have been pinning me down for years, things that I cannot share with anyone else.”*

## Helpline activity

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Our Freephone Support and Information Helpline is open 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.



Over 1,800 people contacted our Helpline for support this year – a 4% increase on last year.

### How Do People Access Helpline Support and Information?

- 74% of contacts were made via the Helpline number
- 8% of contacts were made via the Families Outside office line
- 7% of contacts were made via people leaving messages on our answering service
- 11% of contacts were made via other avenues including e-mail, letter, text, or social media



### How Long Do We Spend Talking To You?

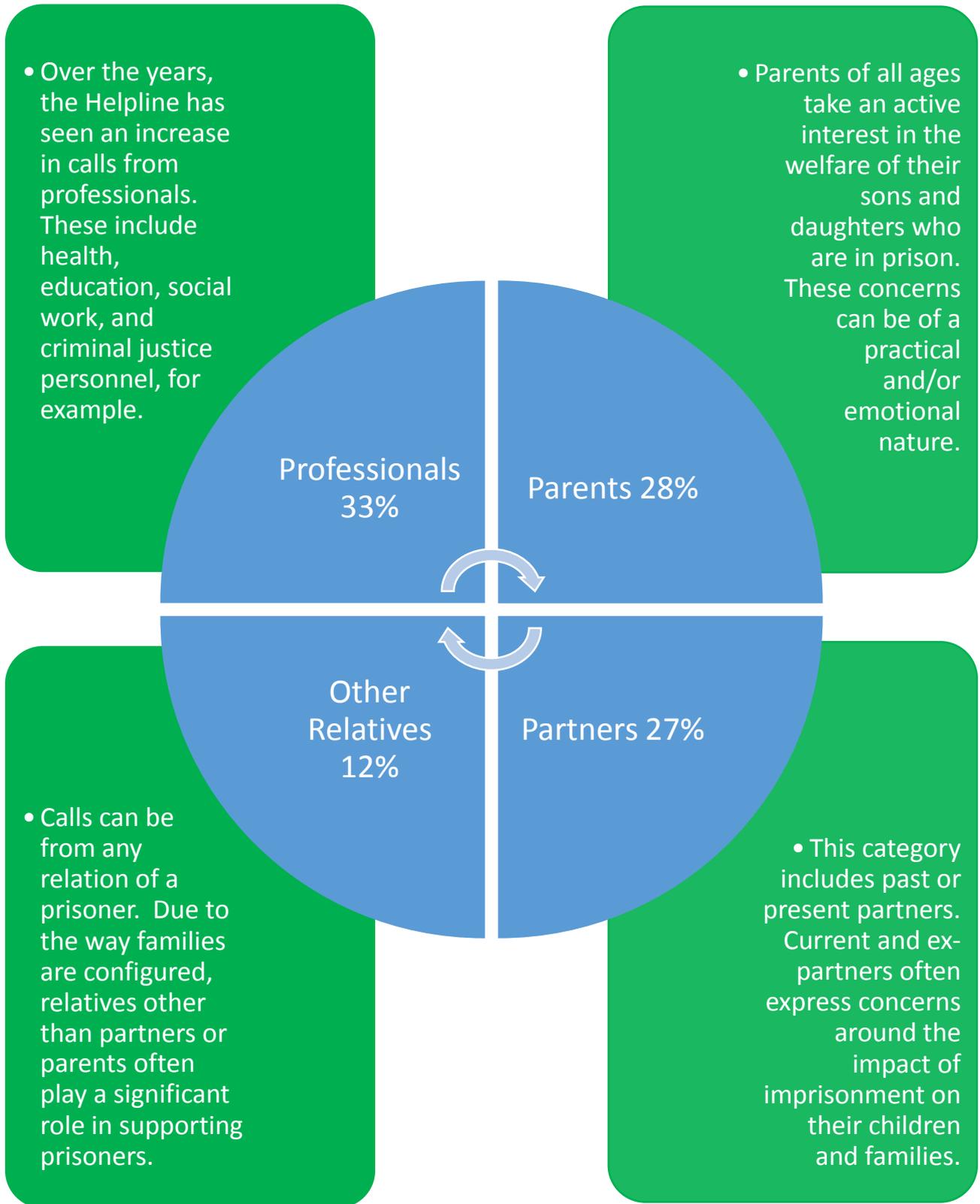
- Over 70% of our callers have positive outcomes in 10 minutes or less.
- Over 15% of our callers have positive outcomes in 10-20 minutes.
- Over 7% of our callers have positive outcomes in 20-30 minutes.



“I was really worried before I spoke to you. No one could answer my questions. My mind is now at ease. Thank you so much. Keep up the good work.”

## Who did we talk to?

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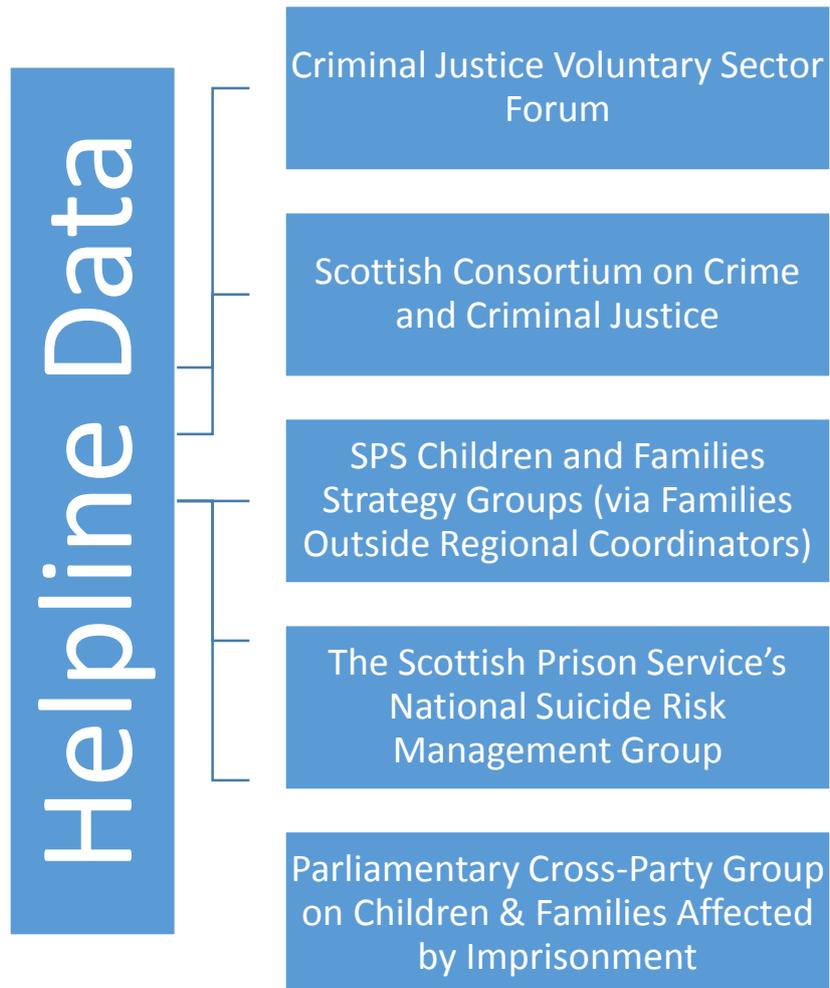




## Helpline Data

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The Helpline provides information and feedback to many relevant organisations and interest groups across Scotland. Helpline data contributes to the shaping of policies and practice. Some of the groups that the Helpline provides input to are listed below.



“I didn’t know where we could turn with our concerns. Thank you for listening and speaking to the prison. You have been like a saviour to me.”

## Stages of a helpline call: a case study

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### Talking

Mary calls the Helpline. Her daughter Jenny is in prison. Mary's 8 year old son Joe has been diagnosed with autism. Mary wants Joe to maintain contact with Jenny, but he finds travel to the prison and the noise in the visit room hard to cope with.

### Listening

Mary is struggling to pay for visits to the prison. She is in receipt of the appropriate benefits but has never heard about the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme (APVU).

Mary has literacy difficulties and cannot read or complete forms by herself.

### Helpline Actions

Arrange for prison visitor centre staff to assist Mary in completing the APVU form.

Liase with family contact officers at the prison. As a result, bonding visit forms are given to Jenny to complete so that Joe can have a more positive visiting experience.

Signpost Mary to a voluntary organisation who can help with transport to prison visits.

Signpost Mary to Austism Scotland who will support her as she comes to terms with her son's diagnosis.

## Developments this year and beyond

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Continued efforts have been made over the past year to ensure best practice. Some of the areas we have concentrated on have included the following:

### Helplines Partnership Member

The Helpline has used the Helplines Partnership standards as a compliance indicator. Areas of interest include planning and running the helpline, helpline service provision, recruitment, training and development policies, and working in partnerships.



### Purchase of New Telephony

Our new telephony system provides more scalability and offers the flexibility of having administrators work from different locations as part of the same office group. New headsets enable background noise to be eliminated.

### Room Move

The helpline now has a dedicated room within the building to ensure privacy and confidentiality for all callers.



### Staff Training

Helpline staff attended numerous training events as part of their continuous professional development. Training included child protection, mental health first aid, helplines partnership training, evaluation learning set, and logic modelling.

### Database Updates

The helpline recruited the services of an expert volunteer who is upgrading the database and tailoring it to requirements of the helpline.



## Conclusion – another successful year!

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The Support & Information Helpline clearly meets its targets within our Strategic Aims, resulting in a range of positive outcomes for families. It provides and increases direct support and information to families, who often use the service both for one-off queries and as a ‘first port of call’ to link them into more in-depth support. It also raise awareness and influences policy and practice regarding families affected by imprisonment, based on the fact that professionals who work with families make up a third of contacts to the Helpline.

Over the next year we plan to...

### Launch our new helpline number

In following the OFCOM directive terminating the use of 0500 numbers, the helpline have purchased a new 0800 number which will be launched within the next year.

### Develop New Publications

The launch of new publications will coincide with the launch of the new helpline number.

### Implement our new Database

Our new and improved database will be fully implemented.

Helpline Team, Families Outside  
September 2015

“Before I called Families Outside my only option to get money for travel to a prison visit seemed to be the pawn brokers. Families Outside pointed me in the right direction to get help with travel costs.”